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THE WOMEN'S SAFETY PROJECT: A COMMUNITY BASED STUDY OF SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION IN WOMEN'S LIVES

REPORT ON THE PILOT STUDY

SUBMITTED TO

THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION DIVISION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.1. Introduction to the Women's Safety Project -- Goals and Objectives.....1
1.2. The Research Team.....2
1.3 The Need for a Canadian Random Community Survey.....3
1.4 The Advantages of Face-to-face Interviewing.....6
1.5 Naming the Project -- The Concept of "Safety".....8

2. The Women's Safety Project and the Pilot Study-- Purpose and Goals.....11
2.1 Testing/Refining Fieldwork Processes and Data Management Systems.....12
2.2 Testing and Developing the Skills of the Interviewing Team.....12
2.3 Testing and Refining the Questionnaire.....13

3. The Questionnaire -- Construction, Design and Revisions.....17
3.1 Introduction to the Pre-Test Research Instrument.....17
3.2 Selected Literature Review for Design and Construction of the PreTest Questionnaire.....19
3.3 Overview of Changes to the Research Instrument.....32
3.4 Specific Revisions to the Questionnaire.....34

4. Sample Size and Inclusiveness.....42
4.1 Sample Design.....43

5. Recruiting and Selecting Interviewers.....45
5.1 Criteria for the Selection of Interviewers.....45
5.2 Interviewer Application and Selection Process.....46

6. The Interviewer Training Program.....51
6.1 Philosophy of the Training Approach.....52
6.2 Overview of the Training Program and Its Development.....53
6.3 Training Goals and Objectives.....55
6.4 Techniques Used to Meet Training Goals.....56
6.5 Evaluation of the Interviewers.....63
6.6 Discussion of the Training.....64

7. Supervision, Team Management and Team Support.....67
7.1 Supervision Sessions and Approach.....67
7.2 Team Meetings.....72

8. Fieldwork Processes and Data Management Systems 74
8.1 Conducting and Managing Fieldwork 74
8.2 Determining Eligibility 76
8.3 Introducing the Study to Respondents 77
8.4 Handling Refusals 79
8.5 Setting Appointments and Conducting Interviews 80
8.6 Ensuring Privacy 81

9. Fieldwork and Interviewing Materials 82
9.1 The Introductory Letter 82
9.2 Fieldwork Letters to Leave With Households / Respondents 83
9.3 Interview Materials For Respondents 84

10. Conclusion 86

11. Bibliographies 89
11.1 General References on Sexual Violence and Physical Abuse in Women's Lives 89
11.2 Incest and Child Sexual Abuse -- Psychological Effects, Revictimization, Research and Clinical Findings 99
11.3 Selected References on Methodology 106

1.1. Introduction to the Women's Safety Project -- Goals and Objectives

The Women's Safety Project was developed out of the widely expressed need for original, comprehensive and in-depth *Canadian* research on the prevalence, nature and impact of women's experiences of sexual and physical abuse. The project is a community-based survey, designed to generate quantitative and qualitative data on the *relationships and interconnections between forms of abuse* (including sexual assault, child sexual and physical abuse, and physical assault in intimate relationships). In particular, it will provide information on the *actual prevalence of violence and abuse*, as well as *women's experiences* of sexual abuse and violence, including the short and long term psychological and material effects of violence, over the course of their lifetimes.

In this study we are documenting and analysing *women' perceptions of their own safety*, and *how women's feelings of fear in both public and private spheres serves to restrict their lives and freedom of movement.* We examine *the kinds of precautionary measures women take in their everyday lives to avoid perceived dangerous situations* and to make themselves feel safer. In addition, *the extent to which actual crimes of violence and abuse are reported to the police and processed in the criminal justice system* is documented, as are *the conditions which affect a woman's ability and choice to report an experience of violence or abuse.* A central area of investigation in the study is also the phenomenon of "Revictimization," namely, the apparent increased vulnerability

to sexual assault in adulthood of women who were sexually abused in childhood.

In the main study we gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative data generated from face-to-face in-depth interviews conducted by trained interviewers, with a randomly drawn sample of approximately 400 women in the City of Toronto. The pilot phase of the study, tests the methodology for the main study, based on 30 interviews, and is undertaken in order to test, revise and validate the efficacy of the methodological approach, as is discussed in the following report.

1.2. The Research Team

The project was initiated and is directed under the leadership of the two principal investigators, Lori Haskell, and Melanie Randall. Additionally, the project team has been assisted by Dr. Rhonda Lenton a statistical and research design consultant, as well as key personnel from the Institute for Social Research at York University, including David Northrup and David Bates. Dr. Diana Russell has also provided invaluable input, as has Sandra Butler, M.S.W., and Dr. Judith Herman. Additionally, a team of experienced female interviewers were involved in the data collection phase of both the pilot and main study. We are pleased that the project is also supported by of a wide variety of community agencies and services.[1]

[1]See letters of support submitted with proposal.

1.3 The Need for a Canadian Random Community Survey

For the Women's Safety Project we are utilizing a survey research approach involving face-to-face interviews with a random community sample. This has significant implications for the usefulness and generalizability of the findings to the Canadian public at large and Canadian professionals concerned with the prevalence, nature and impact of violence and abuse against women. The methodology of this study is based on and adapted from the validated methodological approach utilized in the studies published by Dr. Diana Russell.[2]

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[2]Dr. Russell's methodology is superior to most other studies ever undertaken on the topic for a number of reasons. First, her sample was large enough to make meaningful generalizations possible; in total, 930 women were interviewed in the course of her research. Equally important, the women interviewed were randomly selected and statistically representative of the female population, thus the limitations of self-selected studies were avoided. Dr. Russell's interviewees represented a diverse variety of socio-economic, racial and cultural backgrounds. Again, this allowed for reliable and generalizable conclusions from her research about the histories of participants to violence in the female population as a whole.

Dr. Russell's research was also important because of her method of data collection. In particular, her interviewing process, was extremely well designed and sensitive to the pain, trauma and often secrecy which surround the issues of sexual and physical violence. Dr. Russell used face-to-face interviews to collect her data because questionnaires and telephone interviews are often limited research tools, particularly in terms of eliciting full disclosures about painful and often highly stigmatized personal experiences.

It is now widely recognized that the careful methodological approach adopted by Dr. Russell in her work, especially in terms of some of the considerations raised above, is responsible for the high rate of disclosure in the interviewing process of her research and the reliability of her findings (which have since been confirmed by, for example, Gail Wyatt's similar research in the Los Angeles area, published in 1986). Russell's findings are reported in the following books: The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women, Rape in Marriage and Sexual Exploitation.

David Finkelhor and his associates published recommendations in A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse[3], which strongly support the approach taken in this study. Finkelhor and his associates write that:

> i) It is eminently possible and scientifically preferable to conduct studies of sexual abuse with general population surveys. . .
>
> ii) The trend of the evidence at the moment points to the advantage of interviews over self-administered questionnaires. The personal interview appears to allow for greater rapport, gives opportunities for clarification, and reminds the respondent of the expectation of honesty ...
>
> iv) The evidence appears most convincing that studies containing multiple screening questions, each of which can elicit reports of sexual abuse, are preferable over a single screening question. These multiple screens (a) avoid labels, like "sexual abuse," that respondents may not have applied to their own experiences, (b) give respondents a longer block of time and more opportunities to either remember forgotten experiences or gather courage to reveal embarrassing ones, (c) tell respondents more about the types of experiences the researchers are looking for, and (d) assist recall of experiences with a variety of cues to elicit memories. . . . There is also some indication that recall is aided when the multiple screens include a mixture of relationship-specific questions with activity-specific questions. For suggestions of specific questions to use, we recommend that investigators consult the instruments used by Badgley et al. (1984), Russell (1983), and Wyatt (1985).

An enormous body of literature was reviewed for the study, undertaken prior to the grants awarded by Health and Welfare Canada. A discussion of key works reviewed in relation to research questions and issues relevant to this study is integrated throughout our discussion of the design of the research instrument. Please also see the selected general bibliography of works consulted and a selected specific bibliography which lists the literature consulted on

psychological effects of sexual abuse and sexual trauma in victims, which follow below in this report.

1.4 The Advantages of Face-to-face Interviewing

This mode of administration was chosen because of the important advantages of face-to-face interviews, which can not usually be secured in self-administered or telephone surveys. Fundamentally, only through an interpersonal interaction in an interview conducted by a trained, sensitive and highly skilled interviewer, can the kind of rapport, non victim-blaming approach and trust be developed to establish the conditions for in-depth disclosure of abuse experiences. Furthermore, it has been well demonstrated that the commonalities of women's experiences mean that women are most comfortable and likely to disclose abuse experiences in talking to other women.[4] Also the kind of support, safety and empathy required for discussions about this highly painful and often stigmatized life experience can be best developed through direct personal contact of persons of the same gender.

Reasons for administering face-to-face interviews for the purposes of this research project, then, are summarized below.

1. By being on site with the respondent for the interview, both safety and privacy for the respondent can be insured. It is not usually possible to control for these conditions in self-administered or telephone survey formats.

2. Being face-to-face with a sympathetic, non-judgemental interviewer tacitly conveys a message about the acceptability and importance of discussing abuse

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[4]Diana Russell, 1984, 1986, 1990.

experiences. At the same time it acknowledges the possibility of some discomfort, and allows for an empathic and immediate response which may assist in comfort in disclosing. Impersonal methods (self-administered questionnaire) may reinforce the idea that sexual abuse is a topic too uncomfortable to be discussed.

3. Face-to-face interviews allow for the possibility of developing rapport in the course of an interview, which may enhance respondent's comfort in disclosing.

4. Face-to-face interviewing provides the interviewer with greater opportunity to identify and respond to cues that the subject is uncomfortable for the respondent or that she is misunderstanding or misinterpreting a question.

In his evaluation of research on sexual abuse, Dr. David Finkelhor found that face-to-face interviews are clearly shown to give best results for such a sensitive topic. He found that telephone surveys had the lowest response rate. Finkelhor and his associates point out that "the advantages of the face-to-face interview mode are contingent upon the use of interviewers who are both comfortable with and knowledgeable about the problem of sexual abuse. Given the subject matter, it seems possible that interviewers may discourage candor by even slight and unconscious gestures of discomfort." (Sourcebook, 1986, p. 45) The interviewers for this sexual abuse study underwent intensive training about the subject matter. Candidates were screened to eliminate those who could not deal with the subject matter in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

1.5 Naming the Project -- The Concept of "Safety"

Considerable time and attention was focussed on the question of an appropriate name for the project. "Naming" is powerful, as it suggests to respondents the contents of the project. As such, special consideration to the way in which the subject matter of the study was to be introduced to households drawn for the sample, and to prospective respondents.

The introductory letter used by Dr. Diana Russell in her research, framed the issue under study as one of "women and crime." It did not seem, however, that this was the most appropriate choice for the purposes of this study and for the Canadian context. First, crime is a very general term which can refer to any number of diverse social problems, including drugs, theft, weapons, etc. Given the general lack of awareness and/or social denial around issues of sexual abuse, rape and woman abuse, and the tendency to view these crimes in privatized terms, that is, the widespread tendency *not* to view these as crimes, we decided against this framework. Furthermore, we were concerned not to alarm any women who may, in fact, have a criminal record, or who may feel themselves to be in a vulnerable situation due to their status as refugees, illegal immigrants, prostitutes, etc..

We chose to frame the issues of sexual violence in women's lives in terms of "women's safety." We decided that this approach was the most effective one for a variety of reasons. First, there has been an increasing public discourse about

and media attention to the issue of women's fear and women's safety. For this reason, it seemed appropriate to make the connection between the issues under investigation in this research, and the general issues of women's safety.

We were careful in both the introductory letter and in the introduction to the study that the interviewers presented to prospective respondents, to emphasize that we were concerned to know more about women's safety in both public and personal terms. This broadened the concept of safety away from simply being one of issues of improved streetlighting and better public transportation and urban design, to include threats to women's safety in their personal lives, both publicly and privately, including in their own homes. The letter of endorsement from the Safe City Committee of Toronto was also helpful in legitimizing the need for more information directly from women about issues affecting their own sense of safety.

At the same time, the concept of safety is sufficiently broad that it does not always appear to be particularly threatening in personal terms. We were very concerned not to have any women, especially women who are currently being abused or who have been abused in their own homes, be under the misapprehension that we had any specific information about them.[5] Nor did we want to put any potential respondents at risk, by raising the suspicions of any abusive male partners residing in households which received the letter. The social popularity and legitimacy of the concern for greater safety for women,

[5]This was an additional precaution we took in spite of the fact that the letter was not addressed to anyone specifically, but rather to "Dear Women Resident." Furthermore, it was clearly stated in the letter that the address was randomly selected by computer.

then, was useful to address these concerns and frame the problem as a general one.

An interesting outcome of this strategy has been the consciousness-raising effect our use of the term "safety," framed in public and private terms, has had on respondents. By explicitly extending the definition and scope of the concept "safety," and by asking questions about women's experiences out in the public world, as well as in their most intimate relationships, we have stimulated women's thinking about the notion of their own safety in deeper and more expansive terms. Several respondents have, in fact, explicitly and positively commented on this in the respondent feedback portion of the questionnaire.

2. The Women's Safety Project and the Pilot Study-- Purpose and Goals

Much of the work to initiate the project, construct the questionnaire and conduct initial exploratory interviewing was undertaken in the phase 1 developmental stage of the Women's Safety Project. Prior to commencing the final interviewing for the main study, the pilot study, funded by Health and Welfare Canada, was completed in order to conduct a final run-through of all phases of the work required for the main study and to make any revisions and refinements required before proceeding with interviewing on a larger scale. Specifically, this pilot study included: selecting interviewers, training interviewers, conducting interviews with a select sample of women, and carrying out the actual fieldwork and interviewing with a sub-set of 30 drawn from the random sample designed for the main study. Finally, the pilot assisted in making any necessary revisions to the research instrument and fieldwork processes that were indicated by the process and results of this data collection.

The Pilot study, then, was intended to achieve three broad goals. These are (not in order of significance):

i) to test the research instrument in its actual administration, review the data collected, and make any revisions required;

ii) to train, test and develop the skills of the interviewers;

and,

iii) to test and refine fieldwork processes and data management systems.

The pilot study is essentially a test and evaluation of the methodology designed for the study as a whole. It was intended to validate the methodology and to facilitate making any final revisions and refinements which were required for ongoing the data-collection of the main study. The report on the pilot study, then, is essentially a discussion of the methodology of the main study.

2.1 Testing/Refining Fieldwork Processes and Data Management Systems

A number of objectives were met under this category. These include:

- tracking the sample and fieldwork
- assessing the appropriateness of the introductory statement describing the project, and debriefing with interviewers about their experiences introducing the study
- evaluating the length and process of the interviews
- analyzing the quality of the data elicited during the interviews

2.2 Testing and Developing the Skills of the Interviewing Team

As has already been indicated, the sensitivity of the topic of this study demands unique skills from the interviewers. During the pilot study we careful monitored the skills and progress of the interviewers by tracking their progress in the field. evaluated the quality and coherence of the data they produced, assessed their ability to probe as well as their ability to secure interviews. We also conducted

intensive supervision and ongoing training and debriefing sessions to track their progress.

2.3 Testing and Refining the Questionnaire

Before the pilot study, the questionnaire was reviewed by leading experts in the field. Reviewers who have assessed the questionnaire for this study include:
Dr. Diana Russell (Social Psychology, Mills College, Berkley)
Dr. John Briere (Dept. of Psychiatry, University of Southern California, USA)
Dr. Judith Herman (Dept. of Psychiatry, Boston)
Dr. Rhonda Lenton (Dept. of Sociology, McMaster University)
Sandra Butler, M.S.W., educator on issues of sexual abuse and violence, author, Conspiracy of Silence.
Survey research staff at the Institute for Social Research York University.

The questionnaire was also evaluated in its actual administration during the pilot phase of the study. We assessed the pacing of the interview, the wording and order of questions, and the balance between open and closed questions.

In particular, the pilot was intended to allow us to find out some of the common patterns and recurring responses to the open-ended questions. In some cases, this allowed us to create quantitative responses. In other cases, it was still desirable to retain the open-ended structure of the questions. However, quantifying the responses of the data analysis will be greatly facilitated. Some questions were, of course, eliminated altogether.

The first phase of the pilot study was informal and involved each interviewer interviewing two women, from a selected non-random sample of women contacted by project workers. This stage involved getting initial feedback on the questionnaire including its length, the kinds of information elicited by the questions, accuracy of skip patterns, comprehensiveness of interviewer instructions, and the pacing and overall structure of the schedule. It also provided a practice run for interviewers and allowed for evaluation of their work. Ongoing revisions were made to the research instrument based on the feedback received during this phase.

A second and formal stage of the pilot study was conducted by the principal investigators in conjunction with the Institute for Social Research at York University and our research consultants and interviewers. Once the sample for the project as a whole was designed and drawn, interviews throughout the city were conducted with a sub-sample of 30, drawn from the random sample for the main study.

The most significant results and outcomes produced by the pilot study phase of this project are discussed below. Flowing from the objectives of the pilot, the first and perhaps among the most significant of these is:

i) A well-developed and tested research instrument: The Women's Safety Project questionnaire

At the completion of the pilot study, this research tool was subjected to multiple phases of revisions, adaptations, and refinements. Prior to the pilot it was

reviewed by experts in the field, and tested repeatedly in select samples. During the pilot it was again tested rigorously in both a biased and an unbiased sample, the latter exactly replicating the conditions for the larger random community survey of the main study.

The questionnaire elicited data on a complex and wide range of issues and life experiences. It will be highly useful to other Canadian researchers[6] and can provide the basis for a variety of extended and in-depth studies on particular aspects of the issue of violence and abuse in women's lives (e.g. revictimization, traumatic sexualization, etc.) or within particular communities (e.g. particular cultural, ethnic or other groups of women, clinical samples, etc.)

The two other aspects of the pilot to be reported on include:

ii) The tested and refined methodology for random community surveys utilizing face-to-face interviews on highly sensitive topics

and

iii) The training and supervision of a skilled pool of interviewers able to continue data collection for the main study.

During the period funded by the Victims of Violence Program, Mental Health Division, and the Family Violence Prevention Division, Health and Welfare Canada a number of stages were undertaken towards completion of the pilot study. These included: development of the training program for the

[6] Copies of the questionnaire can only be made available upon specific requests directed to Lori Haskell or Melanie Randall.

interviewing team, recruitment and screening of some of the interviewers, development of the fieldwork procedures, supervision of the interviewers, refinement and adaptation of some project materials, review of the interviews conducted for the pilot, and revisions to the research instrument, the questionnaire. Each of these is discussed below.

3. The Questionnaire -- Construction, Design and Revisions

3.1 Introduction to the Pre-Test Research Instrument

The questionnaire is structured and the interviewing technique is "structured, non-directive." It is structured insofar as the questions must be asked exactly as they are worded and ordered on the questionnaire, but the interviewer must also be "non-directive," by not "leading" the respondent or distorting her responses. It combines open-ended and closed questions designed to elicit quantitative and qualitative data.

An important level of analysis taken into account in the methodological approach behind the questions of the research instrument is the difficulty many women have in identifying their experiences in terms of legal, sociological or clinical language. The words "rape" and "sexual assault" themselves, for example, are very value-laden and many women are reluctant or unable to define their actual experiences of sexual assault as such[7]. Unless an interview schedule is designed to be sensitive to issues of language and definition, the actual incidence and prevalence of this form of sexual violence will not be revealed. Researchers have learned that the definitions of violence and abuse traditionally employed in some studies have been very narrow and restrictive and have often resulted in omitting large portions of women's experiences of sexual abuse and violence. In Canada, definitions of what constitutes rape and sexual assault have expanded from forced penetration to a wider variety of

[7]Russell, The Secret Trauma, and Rape in Marriage, Robin Warshaw, I Never Called it Rape.

forms of unwanted sexual acts. This expanded conception of what constitutes sexual assault is incorporated into this study.

In Dr. Russell's study, for example, when women were asked if they had been raped, and the word "rape" itself was used in the question without any explanation or definition of its meaning, only 22% of the respondents replied in the affirmative. But another 22% described experiences that met the legal definition of rape[8] when Dr. Russell reposed the question later in the interview not using the word "rape" but asking instead, the question in the form of its legal definition. "Hence, the direct question yielded only half of the actual rape experiences reported by [Dr. Russell's] respondents" (ibid., p. 24).

This was particularly significant in asking about sexual assault in marriage, which is beginning to be recognized as an element of wife assault. Women are highly unlikely to identify forced sex in marriage as sexual assault or rape, and so this must be asked about with a great degree of sensitivity and in ways that assist women in framing their experience in language with which they are most comfortable. This shows, then, one of the ways in which a well developed and finely tuned interview schedule elicits the fullest information possible. It is also critically important in terms of understanding that women may not be able to report crimes to police when they lack a social definition that what has happened to them in fact constitutes a criminal violation of the person.

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[8]This latter definition was used in Dr. Russell's survey, reported in The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women.

Initial pre-testing indicated that when questions are asked in a variety of ways, the "chance of tapping memories stored under many different categories is greatly facilitated" (The Secret Trauma, p. 23). The interview questions are designed to tap the different forms which abuse can take by asking questions in a variety of ways to overcome language and terminological differences, conceptual misunderstandings, and probe beyond some of the immediate defenses which interviewees may employ.

The interview questions are also paced so that interviewers have some questions which probe into sensitive areas and then move to less sensitive or threatening questions which allows for some emotional closure or distance for interviewees. The research instrument, therefore, not only takes into account the potential difficulties interviewees may have in disclosing highly painful and stigmatized traumatic experiences, but also employs sophisticated research techniques designed to accommodate and overcome the problems inherent in the process of disclosing abuse. These issues are covered more fully below.

3.2 Selected Literature Review for Design and Construction of the PreTest Questionnaire

The interview schedule is 68 pages long and is divided into 13 sections. There are 3 additional mini-questionnaires that have been constructed to explore in-depth women's experiences of child sexual abuse, sexual assault over the age of 16, and wife assault. Women who do not report experiences of sexual

victimization or wife assault will skip these sections. The specific content of the questionnaire and theoretical approach which informs it are outlined below.

Section 1: Section 1 is very brief and includes initial questions on demographics and household information. Relevant information regarding the respondent's current relationship status is determined as it has relevance for later questions on the interview schedule. Whether women have any disabilities or ongoing medical conditions is also asked at this point in order to be sensitive to the specific experiences of disabled women, and to get data on any relationship between disabilities and experiences of violence.

Section 2: The purpose of this section is to ascertain women's level of consciousness and awareness of whether or not they believe society is a safe place for women. These questions are to determine whether women have to be cognizant of the crimes of violence against women in order to take precautions against them. This section contains a slightly modified version of a scale developed by Riger & Gordon (1985) to measure the extent to which women feel afraid in certain everyday situations and whether as a result of this fear they try to avoid these situations where possible. A second scale developed by Riger & Gordon (1985) that measures the precautionary measures women take, is also included. This scale differs from the avoidance scale because taking precautionary measures requires not only an increased level of everyday awareness of fear and danger, but also a involves utilization of a certain street saavy and strategizing. For this study we developed additional questions about whether or not women had the material resources necessary to take certain precautions. For example, many women can not afford additional locks,

security systems, or to take taxi cabs late at night. Previous researchers simply asked women if they took specific precautions but did not ask whether there were any factors that impeded their ability to take these precautions. Additionally women are asked if they have any disabilities that inhibit them from defending themselves, or taking precautionary measures.

Section 3: This section contains a 10 question scale developed by Russell (1986) which was used in her random survey of 930 women in San Fransisco. She found that these questions not only examine women's attitudes about the criminal justice system and police but they additionally demonstrate to women that the researchers are not victim-blaming. Russell found in her study that many women did not believe that the police would protect them or that they would be fairly treated by the courts. These questions have direct relevance for the research of the Women's Safety Project since one of the objectives is to determine both women's attitudes about services available, as well as their experiences utilizing them.

Women are also asked whether they consider wife assault, child sexual abuse or sexual assault to be 'crimes'. These questions are of importance since in order to utilize the police or criminal justice system women must first be able to define what happened to them as a criminal act worthy of legal intervention and redress.

Section 4 : This section contains questions that explore women's attitudes towards both men and women. Researchers Herman (1984), Runtz (1988), and Briere (1989) have suggested that one of the contributing factors to

revictimization is women's over-valuing and idealization of men. John Briere's explanation of the role of idealization in revictimization is that "in their drive to see men in a positive light, some survivors overlook cues or behaviors that non-abused women would see as danger signs, such as aggressiveness or extreme sexism. Further, when confronted with abusive behavior, the survivor may be more prone to 'forgive and forget', both because she learned long ago to expel such painful events from her memory and in the hope that her current abuser will redeem himself in ways that her original perpetrator(s) did not."

Moreover, we hypothesize that the converse to over-valuing and idealizing men is often contempt for one's self as a women -- due, for example, to internalized hate as a result of the victimization experience -- and for other women as well. This tends to increase a survivor's feelings of isolation and often does result in social isolation since women who have contempt for other women often have few female friendships. This isolation can increase a woman's dependency on the man with whom she has a relationship, and make her more vulnerable in the event that her partner is abusive. It also makes it more difficult to get outside support.

The questions developed to explore this phenomenon consist of a 6 item scale designed to examine whether the respondent over-values or undervalues either men or women as well as four open-ended questions asking the respondent what she generally likes and dislikes about men and what she generally likes and dislikes about women.

Section 5: This section contains questions that explore various degrees of sexually harassing and coercive behaviors that women may or may not have experienced by men known to them. The purpose of this section is to explore the everyday experiences of women's lives. Additionally, after each disclosure women make of a sexually harassing behaviour, they are asked how they dealt with it at the time. The purpose is to examine the ways in which women respond, accommodate and/or attempt to resist harassment and intrusion. What may appear as tacit acceptance to outsiders is often a form of resistance or protection for women. It is important to document the ways that women do attempt to resist intrusiveness and whether women who are <u>not</u> able to resist successfully are women who have been victimized in the past.

This section is important in the exploration of revictimization as one of the suggestions in the literature has been that women previously victimized may be hindered in their ability to protect themselves because of early lessons in powerlessness. Additionally, women who relied on dissociation as a defense against the trauma of the sexual abuse they experienced as children often involuntarily dissociate as adults when faced with a potentially threatening or anxiety provoking situation.[9]

Section 6: Researchers Dobash & Dobash (1983), Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) and others have reported that in order to understand the role violence plays in a relationship it is important to examine the day to day activities of the men and

[9]This has been evidenced in the clinical practice of Lori Haskell with women who are survivors of sexual abuse.

women in the context of their relationship. This section contains questions designed to explore the respondents' most current relationship. Specifically, it asks a woman to examine her perceptions and evaluations of her relationship in terms of: the nature of their diasgreements, how each spouse deals with anger, whether or not her partner attempts to control her behavior, style of dressing etc., whether she has her own income or money, whether she feels that there are things that she is prevented from doing generally by her partner's exercise of control, whether she reports feeling afraid of her partner, and finally what she reports she would want to change in her relationship (if anything at all). The purpose of these questions is to get information on what effect violence has on the daily lives of women who later in the interview disclose experiences of battering or marital rape. Most research still tends to focus only on the violent event, i.e.., the severity and frequency of the assault. The effect that the violence may have on everyday interactions has typically not been examined, and is a central area of investigation in this study.

Section 7: This section contains two scales. The first borrows a few of the items from a scale developed by Burt (1980) which measures the extent to which an individual endorses a set of beliefs which could increase the likelihood of sexual violence.

The second scale was developed by the principal investigators and is designed to measure the presence and level of traumatic sexualization. Runtz found in her study of the traumagenic factors as they related to revictimization, that only traumatic sexualization was specific to the experience of child sexual abuse.

The other three factors -- betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization -- also occur to a certain extent during child physical abuse. Traumatic sexualization is described by Finkelhor & Browne as a process in which a child's sexuality (including both sexual feelings and sexual attitudes) is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion as a result of sexual abuse" (1985, p.531). Jehu et al., (1985) also reported that the majority of incest victims in their clinical study tended to "oversexualize their relationships" while at the same time fearing intimacy with men.

Runtz argued that this was likely due to the combination of oversexualizing and overidealizing men and an impaired ability to correctly identify persons who are untrustworthy. A victim of child sexual abuse who suffers from low sexual self-esteem, a distorted perception of men, and an impaired ability to determine the trustworthiness of others could be very vulnerable to subsequent sexual assault and battery in later adult life. Early sexual trauma, in combination with social isolation, low self-esteem, and psychological difficulties could also contribute to difficulty in learning who to trust, how to say "no" in sexual situations, and how to detect danger and act self-protectively. This explanation of revictimization is consistent with the finding that child sexual abuse appears to be most strongly related to sexual assault, which would perhaps be the area of greatest vulnerability for revictimized women. Runtz concludes, that

> the fact that revictimization does occur and that it is specifically related to child sexual abuse, indicates the importance of understanding the dynamics involved from the woman's perspective. Only in this way can women learn to improve their ability to value themselves, to self-protect, and to avoid danger when it arises, given the high likelihood of any woman encountering violence in her lifetime (1987).

We developed a 13 item scale intended to measure various qualities of traumatic sexualization. Questions on this scale are intended to measure whether a woman oversexualizes relationships with men, the degree to which a woman defines her self-worth in terms of her sexual desirability, whether a woman is able to say "no" to unwanted sex, and whether she is able to choose when and if she wants to have sex with a partner. Finally, the aversive qualities of traumatic sexualization are also measured, including whether a woman feels outside of her body during sex, or if she feels threatened or afraid if someone desires her sexually.

We hypothesize that women who report experiences of childhood sexual abuse will score higher on the traumatic sexualization scale than women who were not sexually abused in childhood. Additionally, we hypothesize that there will be a significant correlation between high scores on the traumatic sexualization scale and the occurrence of revictimization. This is an important area of the study since this hypothesis has been made by several researchers but has not been empirically tested. John Briere developed a few questions on his TSC-40 scale on traumatic sexualization but there has never been a scale developed specifically to measure this effect.

Section 8: This section contains questions on the respondent's family of origin. In order to determine the degree and source of trauma a woman reports experiencing in her life and its specific link to experiences of sexual abuse, it is important also to look at other trauma-inducing experiences in childhood to see whether or not they significantly correlate. Questions on the amount and types of psychological and physical abuse are explored in this section. Rather than

measuring only the severity of the abuse, the frequency of the abuse is also measured.

Dr. Judith Herman suggests that a child can often tolerate a fair amount of strict discipline and physical force when the rules are consistent and clear irrespective of whether or not they perceive the rules to be so.[10] We also ask questions about whether women were aware of their parents being physically abusive to one another, as well as whether they ever experienced any separations from either parent.

Section 9: This section contains Briere and Runtz's Trauma Symptom Checklist (TSC-40), a 40 item scale designed specifically to measure the long term effects of child sexual abuse. Despite the many long-term effects of childhood sexual victimization reported in the literature, the vast majority of instruments used in research on the subject have been either ad hoc measures, often lacking reliability and/or validity, or they were originally developed without reference to child abuse and thus may not have optimally accessed abuse-specific symptomatology (eg., Berliner, 1987; Briere, 1989; Conte, 1985; Finkelhor; 1986). Briere reported that at a "National Symposium on Assessing the Impact of Child Sexual Abuse," the researchers concluded that the use of generic assessment instruments as measures of abuse effects is problematic. Furthermore, these experts agreed that new, abuse-specific measures should be developed.

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[10]Personal communication with Dr. Herman, arising from her research on trauma.

John Briere (1989) has posited that abuse impact measures may be divided into "construct" versus "symptom" approaches. The former attempts to relate aversive childhood experiences to clinical phenomena already thought to exist in the general population, such as "hysteria" or "neurosis." Such constructs represent hypotheses about underlying or latent processes which are thought to produce certain symptoms or problems, and which are assumed to be present when these symptoms occur. The construct approach has a limitation if the sexual abuse effects do not directly correspond to the specific pattern of disturbance associated with the construct in question. Briere explains that the symptom perspective restricts itself to observable problems, such as periods of depersonalization, and examines their variation between abused and non-abused subjects. This method allows the available data to describe the exact pattern of abuse-related symptomatology. Symptom items are either interpreted individually, or are summed with similar items to form homogeneous scales.

The Trauma Symptom Checklist 40 developed by Briere and Runtz is a brief, abuse-oriented instrument of reasonable psychometric quality that can be used in clinical research as a measure of traumatic impact, perhaps most notably in the area of long-term child abuse effects (p. 153). The TSC-40 yields six subscale scores (Anxiety, Depression, Dissociation, Post Sexual Abuse Trauma, Sleep Disturbance and Sexual Problems) and a total scale score, and has been shown to demonstrate reasonable reliability and validity in the study of sexual abuse effects (Alter-Reid, 1989; Bagley, 1989; Briere, Evans, Runtz, & Wall, 1988; Cole, 1986; Urquiza & Crowley, 1986).

This scale will be administered to all respondents and should be able to discriminate between abused and non-abused women. Additionally, it is of vital importance to determine the level of symptomology in the general population of women since most of the research has been carried out on clinical populations. This feature of the questionnaire will clearly make a critical contribution to our knowledge of the effects of childhood sexual victimization on a random community population, by providing data not previously generated with this type of sample.

Section 10: This section contains the prevalence questions that Russell used in her (1986) study. The first series of questions asks about sexually abusive experiences before the age of 16. The second series of questions asked about experiences of sexual assault after the age of 16. Russell developed this section after over a year of consultation, research and pre-testing regarding which questions would best elicit women's experiences of sexual victimization. She found that when a number of different questions are asked in a variety of ways, the chance of tapping memories stored under many different categories is greatly facilitated. She also avoided using words such as rape, incest and molestation since many women are unable to accept that such value-laden words might apply to their experiences.

For our study, we made some changes to the questions in this section in consultation with Dr. Russell. Russell provided information on the questions that needed some modification and suggested ones that did not elicit substantive data and required cutting.

Separate sexual assault questionnaires are administered for each of the more serious reports of sexual abuse disclosed during the prevalence questions. Interviewers were instructed to obtain descriptions of the sexual contact(s) sufficiently detailed to ensure that the level of intimacy violated and the context of the abuse experience can be precisely coded.

The separate sexual assault questionnaires ask respondents about their age at the time of the assault, the relationship between victim and perpetrator, how many times the sexual act occurred, who was told, and so forth. There is also a series of open-ended questions exploring women's cognitive meanings of the incident at the time and what understanding they have of it now. Women are also asked if at anytime they ever feared that they would be killed. This is an especially important question as the long-term trauma associated with the fear of being killed is often extreme.

Women are also asked what they identify as the worst part of the experience. This question is to try to determine what women themselves feel is traumatizing. The primary purpose of these questionnaires is to gather qualitative data on the experience and women's subjective meanings about it. There are also questions about the perpetrators, their age, level of education, income and other demographics. These mini-questionnaires include questions about whether women reported to the police and if so what the outcome was. Women are also asked whether they have sought out therapy or other support services.

Section 11: This section of questions asks women where they would send a friend who had been sexually assaulted, beaten by her partner or sexually

abused in childhood. The purpose of these questions is to determine how aware women are of services for victims of violence, and whether or not they would utilize them. It also includes questions on women's understanding of why the social problems of sexual abuse, sexual assault and wife assault exist in our society and how significant a social problem these are perceived to be.

Section 12: This is the final section of the interview schedule and it contains questions primarily on demographics, occupation, income level, ethnicity and religiosity.

Section 13: This section contains questions for the interviewers to record their observations on the interview process. They are to assess whether the respondent had any difficulty comprehending the questions, whether she was comfortable during the interview, etc. It is intended to assist in determining the completeness of disclosure and the validity of the data.

Self-Administered Questionnaire for Respondents: Finally, there is a one page questionnaire that the respondent is asked to fill out. To ensure confidentiality even from the interviewer, the interviewer asks the respondent to seal the sheet in an envelope she is provided with. This one page simply asks a respondent whether she felt comfortable in the interview, whether she felt comfortable with the woman who interviewed her, and whether she was able to answer the questions accurately.

Perpetrator Sheets: Additional mini-questionnaires (described above under Section 10) were developed to ask women about specific abuse experiences.

Separate mini-questionnaires are administered for the following experiences: sexual assault under 16 years of age, sexual assault at 16 years of age or older, and physical assault in intimate relationships. These mini-questionnaires ask women to describe the experience in their own words, and gather additional information about the context of the experience, the perpetrator, the woman's age and the duration of the experience(s), the short and long term effects on her life, and whether the experience was ever disclosed or reported to authorities, etc.

3.3 Overview of Changes to the Research Instrument

During the pilot, the research instrument was evaluated and tested on a number of levels:

- by its actual administration in practice and random interviews (ease of use, clarity of questions, pacing, the wording and order of questions, the balance between open and closed ended questions, etc.)
- by an examination of data generated from these interviews
- by input from the interviewers
- by input from experts in the field, and project consultants

What follows is a brief and general summary of some of the types of changes made. Some of the changes were made in preparation for the formal pilot, based on preliminary interviewing undertaken in phase 1, and some of the final revisions were made as a result of the findings from the pilot. A detailed discussion of the major specific revisions and substantive reasons for these

changes, follow this summary and are itemized under headings referring to each section of the questionnaire.

One general issue which became clear in the course of preliminary interviewing and was addressed during the formal pilot study was the excessive length of the questionnaire. To shorten the interview we made a number of cuts and deleted repetitive questions and scale items wherever possible.

In particular the pilot allowed us to find out some of the common patterns and frequent responses to the open-ended questions. In some cases, this allowed us to retain the open-ended structure of the question but develop some preliminary response categories which will save enormous amounts of time in the data analysis stage. Even though we are collecting both quantitative and qualitative responses, we will quantify some of the qualitative responses. In other cases, some of the open-ended questions were closed. Some questions and sections were eliminated altogether.

Preliminary pre-test interviews had already revealed a number of required revisions and refinements to the research instrument. For example, common responses to the question asking women about what they most fear happening to them, have enabled us to develop coded response categories, while still retaining the open-ended structure of the question. Scales have been shortened by eliminating selected items which proved redundant. The wording of some questions has been shortened and simplified where necessary. An entire set of questions was cut, when it became clear that no useful data was collected. Interviewer instructions have been streamlined and clarified for ease

of use. A variety of design, formatting and spacing issues have also been resolved.

A review of the questionnaire for the purposes of developing the code book was undertaken with Dr. Rhonda Lenton. Initial consultations about the design of the code book were begun in relation to final revisions to the questionnaire.

3.4 Specific Revisions to the Questionnaire

Section 1 The household enumeration which previously appeared on the first page of the questionnaire was moved to the address cover sheets, which track the household identification number for the purposes of tracking the sample, dates and times of interviewer contact with the household, results of contact, etc. This kept all relevant information in one place, and made it easier for interviewers to enumerate at the door and determine the eligibility of potential respondents.

In order to evaluate our methodology, we added a question asking respondents if they had read and received the letter from York University informing the household about the study. This question assists in determining (in the data analysis phase) whether women who had read the letter were more likely to participate in the study, or, indeed, if the letter was received or read at all. Much attention has been focussed on how to present the letter so that it would stand out from all the "junk mail" people typically receive.

The question asking if any of a woman's children did not live with her was cut because the information was not particularly relevant to our areas of investigation.

Section 2. In this section of the questionnaire a number of revisions were made. The question asking women what they were most afraid of happening to them was initially open-ended. After examining the patterns in responses, we developed codes for this question to facilitate data entry.

The questions which asked about the level of women's concern about the problem of child sexual abuse were also cut. The questions were too specific and geared to women with children and we wanted to know all women's opinions, awareness and acknowledgment of the problem of child sexual abuse in our society, regardless of whether or not they were mothers. Furthermore, we developed a more specific question asking women how much of problem they think child sexual abuse is in our society, and what understanding they have of why the problem exists. These questions were relocated later in the questionnaire.

Two items found to be somewhat redundant and time-consuming were cut from the scale asking women about their fear levels and avoidance at certain times and places. Two items were also cut from the scales asking women about precautionary measures they take in a variety of everyday life situations. Three of the additional yes/no questions asking women about precautionary measures were cut to streamline this section, and quicken the pace.

One significant addition was made to correct the omission of an essential piece of information. In addition to asking women how often they had trouble sleeping due to fear, we also inserted a question to ask women over what period of time this difficulty sleeping persisted as we learned that in some cases, women had difficulty sleeping for many years of their lives. Appropriate response codes for this question were developed.

Section 3. This section began with a nine item scale adapted from Diana Russell's questionnaire, asking women their attitudes in response to a variety of woman-positive, non victim-blaming statements about violence against women. Two of these questions were cut for reasons of redundancy, and a new item was introduced. The new statement was specifically related to the issue of racist and discriminatory police practices. We believe that it is important to acknowledge the often legitimate concerns that women, especially women of colour and immigrant women, may have regarding reporting abuse experiences to the police, and wanted to open up the possibility that some women would want to talk about their perceptions and experiences of racism and discrimination.

Section 4. One of the areas in the questionnaire that interviewers reported some respondent difficulty was the set of questions on women's perceptions of attributions of gender. We found that respondents would often begin by listing the positive or negative attributes of the particular men and women they knew in their own lives, as opposed to their perceptions about <u>general</u> gender traits. Alternatively, some respondents answered the question by listing the kinds of attributes they would like to find in their concept of the "ideal" man or woman.

This difficulty seemed to be linked to a perceived ambiguity in the phrasing in the question, but also more fundamentally to a difficulty women have in explicitly (rather than implicitly or unconsciously) generalizing in terms of the category of gender. Much of what is assumed about gender roles is taken for granted and is only articulated with great difficulty.

To remedy these difficulties we did additional training with the interviewers on this section of the questionnaire, and on how to respond to respondent confusion. We also reworded the question and the probes to aid in greater clarity. Specifically, we asked women what kinds of things they liked and disliked that they associate with men, maleness and masculinity in general, and associated with women, femaleness, and femininity in general. These approaches have since proven to be effective based on our review of the data collected since then.

Section 5. This section was shortened by the elimination of one question and all of its component parts. We also deleted the word "bitch," from the question about being called a sexually insulting name, because it was such a common insult and form of verbal abuse, and our particular concern was to find out about the specifically *sexually* denigrating terms used to describe women.

Section 6. This section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information about dynamics in women's current relationships with male partners, with specific attention to patterns of control that may be exerted against her, whether or not she ever feels fearful of him, and the everyday impact of issues of power-sharing, decision making and the expression of anger. Because we found that

this section generated data that was interesting, but not always directly relevant to the focus of our investigation, this set of questions was reworked and integrated into the mini-questionnaire which deals with women's experiences of physical and or sexual assault with male partners. In this way, the specific abuse experiences and everyday impact and context of these experiences can be explored in a more focussed way. This cut also saved a significant amount of time in the questionnaire's administration, as women not physically abused by partners skipped these questions.

Section 7. Two items were cut from the attitude scale which explored sexuality and accommodation. The series of yes/no questions measuring traumatic sexualization was also shortened by deleting 2 questions. A new question asking women about periods when they have considered themselves to be very sexually active with different partners was inserted, in order to capture the dimension of over-sexualization which can be a long-term effect of sexual abuse and traumatization in childhood.

Section 8. This set of questions concerning the family of origin was significantly modified, including substantial deletions and additions. The questions asking respondents their perception of the family rules were cut entirely, as was the question asking specific information about the absence of the mother/mother-substitute, and father/father-substitute. Again, the data was interesting but not directly relevant to the scope of our investigation, and this was a time consuming section of the questionnaire to administer. Because some of our initial interviewing revealed the emotional and psychological significance of children's witnessing of their mother's physical abuse at the

hands of their father/father-subsititute, some questions were developed to ask about this. While this area of investigation warrants its own in-depth exploration, it would again have taken us too far away from the specific set of research concerns under examination to have developed a separate mini-questionnaire on this experience.

Section 9. The TSC-40 remains intact except for the elimination of a few of the items dealing with sexuality. These items were redundant in relation to the questions on traumatic sexualization and accommodation developed in Section 7 of the questionnaire.

Section 10. The changes in this section were mostly to resolve issues of formatting and interviewer instructions. The series of questions asking respondents about childhood and adult experiences of sexual abuse and physical assault are highly effective in eliciting disclosures, by tapping memories in different ways, by taking women through their life sequentially, by asking about the same time of abuse experiences in the context of different relationships, etc.

To shorten this section we did consider the possibility of cutting the final two questions, which again ask about any actual or attempted sexual contact between the respondent and a relative. However, after reviewing the data we discovered that one respondent answered in the negative to all of the initial questions about incest and other forms of child sexual abuse, but then at the very end of the prevalence section, after all of the questions about adult experiences, disclosed her experience of many years of childhood sexual

abuse perpetrated by her older brother. This clearly confirmed the effectiveness of these last two questions in terms of first, asking about the same abuse experiences in a different way, and second, providing respondents with an additional opportunity for disclosure which she may require for reasons of retrieving memory, or the additional time required to establish rapport, safety and trust in the context of the interview process.

A change was made to the question asking about any unwanted sexual experiences with a girl or woman, to make the criteria for a sexual abuse experience consistent across female and male perpetrators. There were two reasons for this change. First, exploratory interviewing with a biased sample indicated that women would occasionally report experiences with girls or women which were ambiguous and/or at the very minor level of sexual violation, and which did not always qualify as abuse experiences (because, for example, there might not have been any actual physical contact, or because the experience was same-gender peer sex). This was consistent with Russell's finding on the subject.[11]

Second, although there are several opportunities within the interview for women to disclose experiences with female perpetrators in response to questions posed in gender-neutral terms, it is important that the specific question asking about female perpetrators had the same criteria for qualifying

[11] See The Secret Trauma, especially chapter 19, p. 296, on "Female Incest Perpetrators." The confusion about unwanted sexual experiences with women, and the issue of homophobia in same-sex sexual experiences, was also discussed with Dr. Russell in our in-person consultations with her at the beginning of the project.

an experience as abusive, as do those questions asking about male perpetrators, or questions which ask about perpetrators of either gender. For these reasons, the question was revised to ask about any unwanted sexual experience with a woman because the respondent felt forced, physically threatened, or in some other way helpless.

The questions which asked women their feelings and ideas about pornography were also deleted for a variety of reasons. These include the facts that: they were too general, there are complicated definitional issues about what constitutes pornography, the questions were not linked to any actual abuse experiences, and respondents had difficulty specifying the particular effects pornography has had on their sexuality or sexual experiences. With additional development, another study might fruitfully explore these complex issues.

Section 11. Two significant changes were made to this section of the questionnaire. First, the questions asking women their understanding of the scope and reasons for the social problems of rape, wife assault and child sexual abuse were revised so that they focussed the questions away from an overly vague notion of a "social problem" without any specific people involved, towards framing them in terms of human agency. Specifically, we wanted women to reflect upon why they thought some men committed the crimes of sexual abuse, sexual assault and physical assault and so posed the questions in these terms.

Second, the questions about the kinds of services women would recommend to a friend who had been victimized by violence did not work effectively, took

considerable time to administer, and so have been deleted. It was too difficult and problematic to ask about services in abstract and hypothetical terms. The interviewers reported that many respondents seem to feel that the questions tested their knowledge of what services were available. Furthermore, there was a sense that because the questions asked about an experience that was hypothetical and removed from their own experience, some respondents felt that there was a "correct" thing to do, which might, for example, include reporting to the police. This clearly does not accurately measure a woman's actual willingness to report a real abuse experience to the police, in the context of her own life circumstances and relationships. The questions on services, then, remain linked to actual abuse experiences documented in the perpetrator sheets.

Section 12. The questions about demographics are not substantially altered, save for some formatting changes to facilitate ease of administration.

4. Sample Size and Inclusiveness

The sample for the Women's Safety Project consists of women between the ages of 18 and 60 years who live in the City of Toronto at a permanent address. Sample size for the formal pilot study reported on here is 30.[12]

[12]As discussed and agreed upon in our meeting with Vera Legasse, Family Violence Prevention Division, Health and Welfare Canada, Toronto, OISE, Feb. 28, 1992.

The size of the sample for the main study is 400. This sample is large enough to generate findings which are reliable and generalizable.[13]

4.1 Sample Design

Ideally to draw a random sample of the female population in Toronto, a current and comprehensive listing of all women living in the city is required. Of course, no such completely up-to-date and exhaustive list exists, so the three closest major options were considered for our sample.

The first of these was the telephone directory. This option was rejected because the limitations it imposed were too restrictive. First, all women with unlisted telephone numbers are, by definition, excluded. This is problematic because many women who live alone, and many divorced women deliberately choose not to be listed in the telephone directory for safety and security reasons. This means that a significant population of women would be excluded from the study. Furthermore, a small number of households do not have telephones, also excluding them from the study. Finally, the telephone directory is not entirely up to date, meaning that many addresses are not current

[13]Clearly, research with an even larger sample would ultimately be desirable. Should funds ever be secured, and with a tested questionnaire and methodology, as well as a team of trained and experienced interviewers it would be relatively straightforward to expand the sample size significantly. Hopefully, the significance and quality of the quantitative and qualitative data generated from the sample of 400 will demonstrate to funding bodies the feasibility and desirability of conducting the survey with a much larger sample size. Rigorous analysis of sub-sets of a greatly expanded sample of say 2000, would, of course, provide much needed data on particular groups of women, including racial, cultural and ethnic populations.

or accurate. The use of the telephone directory would mean that we do not really know the probabilities of selection.[14]

The second option considered was the use of the census data organized by Enumeration Areas. While the use of census data gathered from enumeration areas is certainly a workable option, consideration of cost and speed factors eventually eliminated it as the most viable for the purposes of this study. The enumeration area option would provide a clustered (and therefore not truly random) sample. The diminished efficiency and lessened statistical precision associated with this option persuaded us that if was not the most appropriate basis for the sampling strategy of this study.

Assessment records were selected as the basis for the sample drawn for this study and pilot due to the methodological and implementation advantages offered through their use. First, the assessment records list everyone in the city, including both owners and renters. In addition to being as comprehensive a listing as possible, this information also facilitates the mailing of the introductory letter. More importantly, the assessment records allow for the production of a truly random, rather than clustered sample. Moreover, they make it far easier to produce a machine readable list of addresses, sorted by postal code, making data collection easier and less costly. And, they allow for an easier system of logging or tracking the sample (through maintaining a data base of sample information).

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[14]Tremblay, Victor. "Selection from Telephone Directories: Importance and Consequences of Unlisted Numbers." New Surveys, Statistics Canada, vol. 7, no. 1, 1982, pp. 8-14.

For the pilot study a small sub-set of the addresses randomly selected for the main study was drawn for the initial fieldwork and interviewing of the pilot phase.

5. Recruiting and Selecting Interviewers

5.1 Criteria for the Selection of Interviewers

The specific nature and content of the material under investigation in our study required a particular combination of skills and qualities of critical importance in suiting candidates for this work. These include:

1. A developed understanding and analysis of men's violence against women including an understanding and acknowledgement of the effects of violence on their own lives as well as other women's.

2. Non-victim blaming beliefs and attitudes.

3. Highly developed self-awareness and a general emotional openness, maturity and integration. This includes the confidence and poise required to handle diverse situations.

4. Sensitivity and awareness of the complexities and responsibility involved in interviewing women on extremely painful, traumatic and stigmatizing experiences.

5. Awareness of and sensitivity to the diverse experiences and conditions of women's lives (including issues of class, race, sexuality, culture, religion, etc.)

6. Highly motivated, self-initiators able to create and maintain own structure necessary to schedule and undertake fieldwork.

In addition to these specific criteria, the following general criteria for the selection of interviewers were developed, listed below:

1. Excellent communication skills
2. Excellent and highly developed inter-personal skills
3. Critical and analytical thinking skills
4. Excellent organizational capabilities

5.2 Interviewer Application and Selection Process

Selecting and training the interviewing team is a critical phase in a project requiring highly skilled and competent interviewers. Interviewers selected for this study were chosen on the basis of a number of qualities. Key among these are: i) sensitivity to the issues; ii) non victim-blaming attitudes; iii) previous interviewing experience and skills and other related work experience; iv) interpersonal comfort and skills, and and v) diversity of age, cultural, class and racial background. Because women are the respondents and the subject matter is highly sensitive, women were also selected to conduct the interviews. This allows for greater comfort in the interview and therefore a greater possibility of full disclosure of abuse experiences. Interviewers were recruited from a variety of sources, including academic institutions, community-based organizations, and service agencies for assaulted women in order to tap the widest possible pool of talent. During the pilot, the interviewing team was recruited and trained in preparation for data collection for the main study (funded by other sources) but the initial interviewing conducted by the team was undertaken for the purposes of the pilot.

There were several steps involved in the application procedure. First, potential interviewers completed a four page interviewer application form. The form required the provision of basic background information, employment history information, and information about specific skills and experience relevant to the work of the Women's Safety Project. Additional questions explored what experience they had conducting interviews, counselling, or working directly with women.

Most importantly, however, the application form was itself designed to elicit information about applicants' attitudes about and understanding of violence in women's lives and the dynamics of disclosure of these experiences. Candidates were asked to respond to questions about their analysis of the problem of violence against women generally and the impact of this violence in women's lives. This stage was successful as an initial self-screening phase as many individuals who expressed interest in the project and picked up the form did not actually return their application forms, because, we assume, they were unprepared for the complexity of the work and the application process. If we determined that criteria one and two were met on a basic level by the answers given on the application form, an interview with the candidate was arranged.

All candidates were screened and interviewed personally by the two project directors for one hour periods. A standardized set of questions was used with all candidates. In order to determine if the additional criteria were met, women were asked a series of personal questions about their own lives. For example, women were asked how they first became aware of violence against women as an issue, how their own lives may have been affected by violence, if they

thought that they would have difficulty asking women about any specific type of violence or experience, and finally, if they had the emotional support and resources in their own lives necessary to do this type of demanding and emotionally draining work.

The candidate's self-awareness was evaluated in terms of how she articulated her awareness of the general or specific impact of violence in her life. We were particularly attentive to any indications of minimization or denial on the part of prospective interviewers about their own experiences. The level of awareness which candidates would have about other women's reactions, defenses and coping mechanism was demonstrated, in part, by her own ability to articulate the effect of any abuse experiences she may have had on her own life. Her emotional reaction to being asked about her own experiences and their impact was also an important indicator of her general self-awareness, poise and preparation for interviewing on this difficult subject area.

Applicants who were open and straightforward in their responses and their ability to discuss these issues were considered to be the best equipped and the most emotionally prepared to handle the content and process of the interviews for the Women's Safety Project. Women who were defensive or angry at being asked about these issues were considered not ready to interview other women about the same experiences. It was expected that there might obviously be some discomfort in discussing such personal experiences in the context of a job interview, but given the sensitivity and demands of the particular job of interviewing women about their life histories and their abuse histories, we determined that candidates who were emotionally mature women would talk to

us about their discomfort and not become angry or withdrawn. Furthermore, they would understand the connection between being able to reflect on their own lives and being able to ask other women to undergo the same process.

Applicants were asked about their own support networks because we think that there is an ethical responsibility to ensure that interviewers have their own established sources of support in their personal lives. Asking these questions also makes clear to the applicants that work on the sensitive and often painful subject matter of violence against women requires that personal care be taken to deal with any of the issues which may be triggered in our own lives.

Finally, in the interview applicants were given a section of the interview schedule and were required to interview one of the principal investigators. We were concerned to test the critical and analytical thinking skills of applicants, as well as witness their naturalness and comfort level in actual interviewing. Women who took on a cheery, artificial voice or were very mechanical in their responses were considered not comfortable emotionally or connected to what they were actually interviewing about. Women who became stuck or frozen at the point of a personal disclosure, or who asked inappropriate or distancing questions, were also deemed to be not ready for interviewing on this project.

Candidates were also assessed on their ability to probe in an interview situation, by requiring them to interview one of us using selected open-ended questions asking about specific abuse experiences. An evaluation of their probes also provided information on their ability to critically and analytically track the information they were being told. The candidates' probes were

evaluated in terms of whether they helped clarify the information given, whether they guided the interviewee to further explain and discuss what she was reporting, and whether the probe was on topic (as opposed to representing an attempt to distance the interviewer from the actual material being disclosed).

We also asked applicants about past projects or work they had undertaken which required and demonstrated both the ability to be motivated, show initiative and provide their own structure for task completion. This was obviously very relevant to the job of carrying out fieldwork and interviewing in a self-directed way.

6. The Interviewer Training Program

The training involved approximately 40 to 65 hours of work for each interviewer. The range of time was partially contingent on the skill level each candidate had upon entry to the project, and the speed with which interviewers learned and mastered particular techniques and skills.

After screening and hiring, all interviewers were thoroughly trained, especially about the dynamics of rape and incest. The training included a focus on the complex issues surrounding women's experience of assault in the context of intimate relationships. The training program was designed to include discussions on the different ways that women define and make sense of their own experiences. Emphasis was also placed throughout the training on how women would present emotionally laden material from their own lives, the range of ways and words through with which the respondents might describe their life experiences. The tendency to defend against and minimize at use experiences was also explored in depth.

The training program was designed by the Project Directors. Some consultation was provided by Dr. Diana Russell and Sandra Butler, M.S.W. Some of the training on the survey research components of the project was developed with assistance from personnel at ISR, York University. One of the training sessions was led by David Northrup, Survey Research Manager, Institute for Social Research, York University.

6.1 Philosophy of the Training Approach

The training was based on the premise that effective interviewing on the topic of violence in women's lives could not be undertaken without an examination of these issues in terms of one's own life. Specifically, this meant that no interviewer could effectively take a respondent through the interview process without first experiencing it herself. Furthermore, sufficient personal awareness and empathy for the diversity of women's experiences and life circumstances had to be present. An emphasis on the connections between as well as diversity in women's experiences was integrated throughout.

The training then, took place at the cognitive and the experiential levels. We wanted interviewers to understand that the problem was not one of "us" vs. "them," that it was not a situation where a team of interviewers were exploring and documenting the effects of violence in women's lives "out there." It was stressed that there is continuity in women's experience and knowledge of the reality and the threat of sexual violence and intrusion and that this is, in part, the basis of the interviewing relationship and the conditions which create the possibility for disclosure.

It was imperative that respect and concern for the interviewers were consistently demonstrated throughout the training and supervision, as well as in team discussions regarding the personal feelings and experiences of men's violence shared by members of the team. It was essential that the all members of the team -- project directors and interviewers -- treat each other's disclosures about their personal experiences, with the same respect, sensitivity and concern that

we would want to demonstrate to the women they were actually interviewing in the random sample. This is also the most effective way to narrow the distance between interviewer and respondent and develop a sense of connectedness and empathy during the interview process.

6.2 Overview of the Training Program and its Development

The training incorporated a variety of pedagogical approaches, including traditional lecture format, experiential, interactive and role-play exercises, and a great deal of hands on practice using the research instrument and responding to a variety of situations which might be encountered with respondents and with household members during the course of the fieldwork. There was also a clear and ongoing evaluative component to the training, and indeed, to the interviewer's work throughout the entire project. Interviewers were regularly evaluated by the project directors, by each other and through self-evaluation. A "Job Description and Performance Expectations" sheet was prepared to distribute to each interviewer, outlining the kinds of qualities and skills required to interview women in a random survey about highly sensitive issues.

The major areas of the training program are elaborated below.

i) Introduction to the Study

This portion of the training included an overview of the key research questions under examination, the theoretical approach informing the project and the

questionnaire, and an overview of the purpose and goals of the project. Information about the project history, funding and community support was also given to the team.

ii) Understanding the Questionnaire, and Its Administration

This included a review of the structure of the entire questionnaire, design and structure of questions, and an introduction to how it is administered. A summary and discussion of some of the key issues raised (and not raised) in the literature on violence against women was incorporated so that interviewers could better understand the purpose and context of specific questions and sections of the research instrument.

iii) Learning to Conduct Interviews -- The Interview Process

The process and content of interviewing was also covered, including instruction on pacing, probing, recording verbatim, coding responses, emotional responses of respondents, the different contexts of women's lives, and boundaries, etiquette and professionalism in interviewing. A particular focus on the differences between counselling and interviewing was integrated in this section.

iv) The Ethics of the Project, Confidentiality and obtaining Informed Consent

These issues were discussed in depth including general principles in survey research, as well as the specific considerations of the project and the issue of

violence against women. What constituted informed consent for the purposes of this project was also thoroughly reviewed.

v) Fieldwork procedures

These procedures included how to introduce the study at the door, how to explain the study in more depth with potential respondents, how to plan routes, response rates, and other fieldwork issues.

vi) The Project Management and Tracking Systems

These systems included performance expectations, team meetings and debriefing, supervision, reporting in on fieldwork and interviewing and other organizational issues.

6.3 Training Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives underlying the approach to the interviewer training program are highlighted below. They included:

1. To familiarize interviewers with the history, nature, scope, goals and objectives of the research project.

2. To develop and refine interviewing skills as well as an awareness of the interview process to assist in responding sensitively to women's needs and emotional presentations during the research process.

3. To teach interviewers to administer the interview schedule and undertake all related field work practises.

4. To evaluate the interviewers and to assess our success in accomplishing these goals by measuring the effectiveness and skill of the trained interviewers.

6.4 Techniques Used to Meet Training Goals

1. To familiarize interviewers with the research project.

We produced and distributed a training package that included a theoretical overview of violence against women which informed the research. To begin the training, an all day introductory orientation session was held which included presentations by both principal investigators on:

- the history and context of the project (the need for this kind of community-based research, what the Women's Safety Project can learn and contribute to knowledge in the field, to service-delivery and advocacy, information about our community support, funding support, etc.)

- The social, political and psychological issues surrounding violence against women

- Specific areas of investigation under the research and why these issues are important, including some literature review to provide background and context

- An in-depth explanation of what survey research is and why we were using face-to-face interviewing for the survey

This orientation session also gave interviewers a chance to get to know one another, and begin a dialogue with one another about the issues of sexual abuse and violence in women's lives.

Interviewers were also given the methodology chapter published by Dr. Russell[15] to read, in order to acquaint themselves with the already completed study from which this methodology was based and adapted. Throughout the training and regular research team meetings, discussions were ongoing about the research project relating the theory and methodology of the project. The intention was that the more informed the interviewers were with the research the more involved and committed they would be, and the more skilled they would be in explaining the study and conducting the interviews.

2. To increase interviewers' skills and awareness in interviewing and responding sensitively to the research process and women's diverse needs in this process.

The approach taken here was to assist the interviewers in the development of reflexivity. This means that the interviewers had to learn to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically, the nature of the research and interviewing process. Concretely, this involved developing an understanding of their role as interviewers, specifically their effect and influence on the women

[15]in the revised second edition of Rape in Marriage, 1990.

they would be interviewing and the nature of the interview-respondent relationship. The training techniques used in training to achieve this understanding included experiential exercises and discussions on a number of issues related to the process of interviewing.

The first issue which was explored was that of differences between women's lives in terms of class, race, culture, age and sexuality. The training on differences included experiential exercises where the interviewer discussed the different contexts of their own lives and experiences, and how these contexts specifically shaped and affected their use of language, expression of emotion, attitudes and openness about sexuality, their own disclosures of personal information, their sense of family and cultural identification and loyalty, and their connection to respondents both similar to and different from themselves.

The discussion following the exercise extended to how these same differences may be experienced by the women who were to be interviewed for the study. The discussion was guided by questions that the Principal investigators developed and typed and were distributed to the interviewers. Interviewers were asked to discuss the assumptions they might make because of these differences and how those assumptions might shape or effect the way an interviewer would or would not respond to a woman. Interviewers were also asked to reflect upon the ways they might experience connection and/or disconnection from women whose lives and backgrounds were different from and similar to their own.

Throughout the training, the interviewers developed an awareness of the complexities and nuances involved in the interviewing relationship. The thinking behind this approach was that the more aware the interviewer was of her own assumptions and their related behaviors, the more able she is to be self-aware in the process of interviewing. This heightened awareness allowed an interviewer to be capable of more connection rather than disconnection from a respondent and facilitated greater awareness of the respondent's needs during an interview.

A second training technique sensitized interviewers to their own tolerance and comfort levels in hearing and using diverse language and terminology used to describe sexual intercourse, as well as men and women's sexual body parts. Interviewers participated in experiential exercises in which they listed the words which they felt comfortable hearing or speaking to describe sexual intercourse or other sexual acts. They were then asked to identify the words they were uncomfortable either speaking or hearing to describe these same things. The same exercise was used to describe comfort and discomfort about women's and men's sexual body parts. A third component of the exercise was to think about and discuss all the ways that violence and aggression are expressed in some of the social and slang terminology used to refer to sex and sexuality.

Interviewers learned where their discomfort was located in reference to specific words and discussed why it felt uncomfortable. The intention of these exercises was to increase understanding of themselves and their own reactions, in order to help interviewers better control and modify any discomfort they may feel during an interview, upon hearing a variety of words and

discourses to describe sex. Because there is often such shame and stigmatization attached to the sexual abuse respondents might report, there is clearly the need for an interviewer who does not reinforce any feelings of shame by some how communicating that it is uncomfortable to hear what is being said.

A third training technique dealt with the different ways that women might discuss and respond emotionally to disclosing experiences of sexual violation and abuse. We developed an experiential exercise which asked the interviewers to recall a painful experience of violation in their own lives, and discuss how they would talk about it during a disclosure. We asked them to examine what defenses they would use and what kind of response or behavior would they want from a person interviewing them about these experiences. The exercise was intended to demonstrate both the complexities and the differences in how women respond and discuss their experiences, as well as how different women need different responses from an interviewer.

During the training, discussions also focussed on what the appropriate ways were for them to respond as interviewers to respondents. These discussions examined the differences and boundaries between counselling and interviewing and extended to a discussion about the boundaries required in the interview relationship. The ethics involved in interviewing were also explored. Interviewers were given clear instructions about what behaviors were appropriate and ethical, and what would be considered inappropriate.

Besides the specific exercises and discussions described above, the interviewers were also taught throughout training to monitor continuously what they were feeling and how they were aware of these feelings being expressed and communicated in their body language, voice, facial expressions or by the language they used.

An important part of the training to increase both awareness and sensitivity to the process was to have each interviewer interviewed on her own actual life experiences. Because the interview covers highly sensitive material, each interviewer is put through a full interview process herself, in order to make real and immediate the experience of talking about painful experiences, the kinds of emotional reactions and defenses which may be evoked, (including minimization of the experience), and the kind of sensitivity and pacing she, as a respondent, would want from an interviewer. It was again emphasized that even though this was being done in the training context, it was essential to respond in an authentic manner, and the interviewers did not hesitate to do so. They openly gave their own attitudes and opinions and also disclosed some of the painful material in their own lives.

By interviewing each other, team members experienced both sides of the interview process and could more fully appreciate the kinds of boundaries, pacing and sensitivity respondents might need during an actual interview situation. This process also created a great deal of connection between team members. It also prepared interviewers for the interview process by providing them with the experience of being respondents.

3. To teach interviewers to administer the interview schedule

Throughout the training the interviewers were continuously practicing the skills they had just learned. They also provided ongoing peer evaluation of each other's performance and constructive suggestions for improvement in their work in dyads as well as in the training meetings.

When sufficient role-playing and intensive practising with the interview schedule among team members was completed, the interviewers were expected to complete 2 interviews with women selected from a biased sample. This was part of both their training and their evaluation.

The first interview was set up with a woman the interviewer knew personally, and who had agreed to participate. The second interview was set up with a stranger, from a biased sample organized through the project office. These practice training interviews served three important purposes: i) they provided a real interview experience for the interviewers and allow them to test their skill in a real interview situation; ii) they provided a process through which the interviewer's skill, ability to record responses and probes were evaluated; and iii) they provided actual data which was useful to the process of revising and refining the questionnaire.

6.5 Evaluation of the Interviewers

Before collecting actual data from the random sample, the evaluation of the interviewers took place on four levels. They were evaluated by the project directors in terms of the data they produced (in the test training interviews) and in terms of the interviews witnessed by us. We watched for their overall comfort, their skill in moving through the questionnaire, their ability to pace the interview, to focus the respondent, to record answers, to maintain appropriate body language and eye contact, to respond empathically and to probe well.

Second, they were evaluated by each other and given continuous feedback and constructive criticism about their style and techniques during role-play interviews. Third, they were to self-evaluate their progress and were provided with the opportunity to do so verbally in one-on-one sessions with a project director, and in writing on evaluatior forms they were to fill in. Fourth, the respondents interviewed for their practice interviews, arranged through both their own contacts, and from the strangers from a select sample arranged through the project office, provided written evaluations and feedback on the interviewers. Based on all these levels of evaluation we determined whether or not a candidate was prepared to do fieldwork and face-to-face interviewing with respondents from the random sample.

An additional screening of the interviewing team took place during the ongoing evaluation component of the training. When it became clear that some

women's skills were not sufficiently developed, or that their own emotional issues and difficulties were salient to a degree that they could not effectively conduct interviews for this project, they were let go. The ongoing evaluation and feedback given to trainees during the training process made it evident to the candidates when a significant problem emerged. In those cases where termination was required, an individual meeting was held with the project's directors to discuss with the trainee the kinds of difficulties which were being presented. In all cases, a shared identification of the problems was established among the directors and the training interviewer and the decision to terminate the process was mutual.

6.6 Discussion of the Training

The pilot was important to evaluate the ongoing training needs of the entire interviewing team as a whole, as well as individually. During the pilot, interviewers were to meet with their supervisors immediately following their first completed interview. Interviews were edited immediately before interviewers did a second interview. This proved to be an important step in order to catch any errors an interviewer was making with the mechanics of the interview schedule before she repeated them a second time, risking the loss of important data as well as possibly creating an uncomfortable experience for the respondent.

Interviewers responded well to close supervision. Although many were confident in their skills, they still reported feeling a great deal of responsibility to

complete the interviews thoroughly and at the same time treat the respondents with care and respect. Initially the interviewers' most commonly reported difficulty was feeling they were too focused on the mechanics of the interview schedule and feeling that this may have affected how attentive they were to the respondents.

After completing their initial two or three interviews and learning through their supervision that they were not making any significant errors, the interviewers were less anxious and reported more ease and comfort interviewing.

A major thrust of training had been to assist the interviewers in developing reflexivity. This proved to be very successful as the interviewers were able to include field notes at the end of the questionnaire, on observations they had about the women they interviewed and the interview process. Interviewers also often noted times when they thought that a respondent seemed hesitant or too ashamed to admit to an abuse experience, or when a respondent seemed unsure of how to discuss her own reactions to what had happened to her. The interviewers were trained to respond to the women they were interviewing by acknowledging the discomfort of respondents, and sometimes it was appropriate for an interviewer to offer reassurances to a respondent.

The interviewers were trained to know that acknowledging a woman's sadness or fear was not going to bias the data collected. In fact the data was more likely to be affected when an interviewer did not respond to the emotional dimension of the interview. This, of course, had to include an awareness of their own reactions and behaviour during the interview. The interviewers were quite self-

reflective and discussed the points in the interview where they felt uncomfortable. How to work effectively with these issues was an ongoing theme in supervision, as is discussed below.

7. Supervision, Team Management and Team Support

7.1 Supervision Sessions and Approach

As has been emphasized, the sensitivity of the topic of this study demanded a unique set of skills and capabilities from the interviewers. One of the purposes of the pilot study was to carefully monitor the skills and progress of the interviewers by tracking their progress in the field; evaluating the quality and coherence of the data they produced; assessing their ability to probe, and their ability to secure interviews. Intensive supervision and ongoing training was a feature of the pilot (and, indeed, of the data collection which took place after the pilot).

Regular debriefing sessions to assess the progress made were built into the training and the data collection phase of the pilot (and of the ongoing data collection phase of the main study). Intensive, one-on-one supervision sessions with each interviewer by the project directors were regularly scheduled in order to give interviewers ongoing feedback about their work, assist them with any difficulties they were having, and give them an opportunity to discuss their successes as well as their struggles. The actual supervision appointments were at least one hour in length (and often much longer). Often it took several hours of advanced preparation on the part of the project directors, to do a careful and detailed review the data collected and the interviewer's progress for discussion in the supervision session.

The goals of supervision were:

1. To monitor and evaluate the quality of the data obtained.
2. To support and assist the interviewer in debriefing emotionally.
3. To monitor and evaluate the productivity and skill development of each interviewer.

Through the pilot we learned that supervision was vitally important as a means of ongoing skill development. Through individual weekly supervision with each interviewer we were able to assess each interviewer's strengths and weaknesses. Before meeting with an interviewer for supervision we would first do a careful reading of all their completed interviews to ensure that each questionnaire was complete, and coded correctly and that the qualitative data was detailed and thorough. After each completed interview was read, any cases of missing data were noted as were any mistakes interviewers made on the questionnaire. This type of information was carefully recorded on a separate edit sheet and attached to the questionnaire file.

An overall performance sheet was also completed for each supervision session and kept on file so that we could track each interviewer's skill development and productivity. Productivity was evaluated by the number of addresses approached, appointments made and completed interviews done for the hours worked.

During supervision interviewers carefully examined any errors they made and reviewed their general work performance. Often, the supervision would involve

exploring the complexities of the emotional dimension of the interview process with the interviewer. We learned that, with practice, the interviewers rarely made errors in the mechanics of the interview schedule. The majority of their difficulties were of a psychological nature. Two of the major and recurring difficulties that interviewers struggled with were: i) probing and ii) pacing. These are taken up below.

1. Some interviewers did not probe a woman's experience fully as a result of their own personal discomfort in hearing descriptions of how a woman was sexually victimized. When asked about these difficulties in supervision, a few of the interviewers reported feeling afraid they would be perceived as intrusive if they probed for specifics, or feared that further inquiry would result in a respondent becoming emotionally upset.

In supervision some interviewers discussed the ways in which some of the experiences they were hearing during interviews, resonated with similar experiences they had had in their own lives. They realized that they were making an assumption in some cases that the respondent could not bear the pain of discussing her experiences, when it was really the interviewer who did not want to feel her own discomfort and pain in relation to the material. This was a central issue taken up in many supervision sessions.

Interviewers also learned that the more comfortable and straightforward they were in asking women about their experiences, the more comfortable respondents would be and the more likely they would be to disclose. Not directly asking women what happened to them, or, alternatively, asking

questions that move a disclosure away from the actual victimization experience to less relevant details, can reinforce the belief that experiences of victimization are too shameful to be discussed. Inadvertently, then, by not probing, the interviewer could further make the respondent feel stigmatized by avoiding engaging with the material which had just been disclosed. The issue of probing and asking direct questions was for some interviewers a deeply personal struggle that was continuously worked on in their supervision meetings.

2. Other interviewers had difficulty directing and focussing their respondents to ensure that a reasonable pace was maintained throughout the interview. It is not unusual for a woman being interviewed, to feel anxious around the process of giving her opinions. As a result, she may over compensate by giving lengthy responses to simple yes or no questions. Other respondents were pleased to have the company and the attention of the interviewer, and would sometimes tell personal stories or digress about other matters. These cases demanded special skills and sensitivity on the part of the interviewer, in order to focus the respondents to the questions asked and the level and specificity of answers required.

Some interviewers, however, felt uncomfortable doing this kind of focussing. These interviewers explained that they were asking for the respondent's time and should therefore not cut her short. Unfortunately, however, if interviewers were not able to be firm to help focus a digressing respondent, the interview could become extremely lengthy and even worse, could become exhausting for the respondent. This sometimes resulted in uncompleted interviews, so that the

interviewer had to return again to that household. This problem was stressed and worked with in both supervision and team meetings.

During the pilot we carefully monitored the length of time interviewers were taking for the first half of the interview, before reaching the section asking about actual abuse experiences. We knew that an average length of time should be approximately one half hour. Some of the interviewers, however, were taking up to two hours to get through the first half of the interview schedule, and this obviously was a central concern addressed in supervision.

In these cases, we explored with the interviewer her understanding of why the interview took so long. Once interviewers understood that if they gave clearer directions to the respondent about what was expected of them in the way of answers, the respondents would feel less anxious, would talk in a less unfocussed way, and in many ways would enjoy the interview process more. We also emphasized that it was the interviewer's responsibility to pace the interview to ensure that the material was covered at a reasonable pace, because the respondent did not know what was yet to come in the interview, while the interviewer obviously did.

In the cases described above, supervision was clinical in nature. This approach was tested in the pilot with the consent of the interviewers. We found that with this approach interviewers improved very quickly and the quality of their data vastly improved as well. Additionally, interviewers felt more confident and more at ease with the process of interviewing and with their own skills and abilities. This increased both their motivation and interest in their work. We also learned

that having an intense supervision process which was structured to deal with difficulties head on, meant less time was lost with interviewers avoiding their work because they felt ineffectual or upset.

7.2 Team Meetings

The team met as a whole on a weekly basis to share their experiences in the field, and their strategies, successes and difficulties. Support was also offered to one another. The openness in discussing difficulties developed in supervision carried over into the team meetings. The discussions at team meetings were often the interviewers' observations about the personal effects of the interview process on themselves and on the women they interviewed. The interviewers readily admitted that they enjoyed interviewing but most disliked the difficult task of fieldwork.

Fieldwork proved to be a very demanding and unrewarding part of the work. Interviewers often experienced going to many households where they never found any one home and often returned seven or eight times. Additionally in a large urban centre like Toronto, it was often very frightening for interviewers to be in unfamiliar parts of the city late at night. Even though we had clear times for all interviewers to end their day's fieldwork, an interview started in daylight hours sometimes carried on into the evening past dark. In the pilot we developed a system where each interviewer called the fieldwork coordinator when she returned home.

Team meetings were also the place where we informed the team about the project's overall progress and set goals for the coming week. We also discussed specific questions which we felt the interviewers were not probing well. General issues around the interview process were also taken up in team discussions. Fieldwork processes were reviewed and interviewers picked up new interview kits and materials they needed.

We also held a team social on a monthly basis which was successful in keeping morale up and more importantly in keeping the interviewers connected to each other, to us and to the project. The reason this was necessary was because the job tended to be quite isolating for the interviewers. Once in the field they worked alone. Additionally, because of the need for confidentiality, the work itself could not be discussed with people outside the project. It was important, therefore, for the interviewers to debrief with one another.

8. Fieldwork Processes and Data Management Systems

The fieldwork procedures were developed in consultation with the Institute for Social Research, York University. Issues of interviewer-productivity, scheduling fieldwork, checking in and out of the field, collecting and dropping off interview materials (e.g. completed questionnaires) and other administrative matters were reviewed in the training of the interview team and in ongoing supervision and team meetings.

A fieldwork manual was developed to serve as a written resource for interviewers. This manual covered information under the following headings:

i) Notes on style and technique in interviewing

ii) General interviewing tips: conditions of the interview

iii) Fieldwork information and instructions

iv) Time management and efficient coordination of fieldwork

v) Encouraging reluctant respondents

vi) List of address codes

vii) List of materials required in the field

8.1 Conducting and Managing Fieldwork

The fieldwork was in some ways one of the more challenging and difficult aspects of the pilot (and indeed the ongoing data collection). The difficulty finding people home was the most persistent obstacle and the tedium of sometimes contacting address after address with no results was draining for the

interviewers. However, creative strategies were developed wherever possible to address problems and challenges.

The times most suitable for approaching households was determined to be after 4 p.m. on weekdays, and after 10 a.m. on weekend days, as these are the times when the majority of residents are most likely to be home. Interviewers were instructed to approach addresses during these periods both for maximizing the likelihood of finding an eligible respondent at home, and for most effective utilization of limited project resources. Some interviewers expressed a preference for scheduling their shifts for contacting households during regular business hours, but this was not permitted as the overwhelming majority of response codes when this strategy was tested was "not at home." Only when several unsuccessful attempts had been made to contact residents during weekday evening or weekend day hours was it permissible to do fieldwork during weekday days. Actual interviews, of course, could be scheduled for anytime, including weekday business hours, if this was a preferred and convenient time for the respondent.

Interviewers filled-in weekly schedules committing themselves to work specified hours. They were to check in and out with the fieldwork coordinator for each work shift. This assured both reliability of the interviewer and was a safety mechanism to make sure the team members' whereabouts were accounted for. A "buddy system" was also set up for interviewers to pair up with another team member and keep track of their scheduling to ensure their safe arrival home after the completion of fieldwork or interviewing. Most interviewers also

established personal back-up systems with partners, friends and housemates so that their whereabouts were known and tracked.

Addresses were clustered in such a way so as to facilitate relative ease of accessibility and minimize distance between households. When no one was at home to answer the door, we devised a system of leaving a letter at the household, to indicate that a project interviewer had been by (and would visit the household again at another time), to reiterate some of the information about the study presented in the original introductory letter about the study, and ask that potential respondents phone in to the project office to set up an interview time and get any more information about the study they might want. We found that these letters did sometimes encourage respondents to telephone, and this saved scarce project resources (interviewer salary, travel expense, etc.) and allowed for an appointment to be set up over the telephone. In these cases, care was taken to provide a detailed description of the project, which was to be reiterated by the interviewer with the respondent at the time of their meeting.

8.2 Determining Eligibility

A household enumeration was taken for the purposes of the study. Some households have more than one woman between 18 and 60 years of age. In these cases some mechanism was necessary for randomizing selection of respondents. The woman who had the "most recent birthday" was the one chosen as the eligible respondent for this study.

If a male resident answered the door, interviewers were instructed to introduce themselves and the project in general terms, and ask to speak to the woman (or one of the women) residing at the address. If the woman residing at the household was not home, the interviewer left a "Not at Home" letter indicating that she would drop by again at another time, and inviting the respondent to phone in to the project office to get more information and set up an interview appointment.

8.3 Introducing the Study to Respondents

The introductory explanation of the nature and purpose of the study was always a critical element in the task of securing interviews with potential respondents. The introduction is important in other ways as well -- in terms of general public relations for the project (establishing its legitimacy and social importance); for establishing rapport with a potential respondent; for generating interest in and a sense of connection to the subject matter; and most importantly, for obtaining informed consent from respondents. The way the study was to be introduced was covered in depth in the training of the interviewing team. This included examples of the most frequently asked questions to expect from respondents and how they are best answered.

In introducing the study a number of things were always to be covered:

- a greeting, the interviewer's name and the project name;
- a brief explanation of the nature of the project and why it is being done;

- some information about project support (e.g. funding and community endorsements and support);
- an explanation that participating in the project was voluntary;
- an explanation that interviews were confidential and anonymous.

This information was reiterated on the written consent form that respondents signed.

One of the key features in introducing the study to prospective respondents involved fully disclosing the nature of the interview. This meant making sure that interviewers stressed that safety meant public *and personal* safety in both public and *private life*. It is ethically important that respondents have full information about the areas under investigation and are prepared for questions of a personal nature. For this reason interviewers were instructed that in addition to making a general statement about issues affecting women's personal safety they were *always* to indicate that this specifically included asking about any experiences of sexual assault a respondent may have had. Interviewers were expressly instructed to use the term sexual assault in their explanation of the project and their discussion of what we mean by safety. That we would be asking about sexual assault experiences was also explicitly reiterated on the written consent form.

Interviewers wore project name tags, and carried York University clipboards. Interviewers were also instructed to show a copy of the original introductory letter (on York University letterhead) as well as the letter of endorsement

provided by the Safe City Committee of Toronto. Additional copies of the these letters were to be left at any household that requested them.

Actual "at the door" scenarios were role-played during the training to prepare interviewers to handle diverse situations and responses. "At the door" experiences were also discussed at team meetings, as were strategies for contacting household members and dealing with various responses.

8.4 Handling Refusals

In any study there will be eligible respondents who decline to participate in the study. There are a variety of reasons for refusals, ranging from a lack of interest in the topic, a lack of connection to the interviewer, to a lack of time. Given the sensitive subject matter under investigation by the Women's Safety Project, it has been important to determine, wherever possible, the reason a woman might decline to participate. This s interesting data in and of itself, and in those cases where it was possible to do so in a polite manner, interviewers were to ask respondents why they did not wish to participate.

Moreover, it provides information about the possibility of reapproaching the household after some period of time has passed, to see if the conditions of the potential respondent's life have changed in such a way that participation at a later date might be possible.

It was also important to attempt to determine interviewer effects in this first contact. For example, a woman of colour may be less likely to agree to be interviewed for the study by a white interviewer, for a variety of reasons, which may include a sense of social distance, a perceived racism attributed to the white interviewer, etc. Alternatively, the unfortunate social reality of racism may mean that a white eligible respondent may decline to be interviewed by an interviewer who is a woman of colour.

8.5 Setting Appointments and Conducting Interviews

Interviewers were instructed to conduct interviewers on the spot whenever this was possible and convenient for the respondent. However, the reality of most women's lives was such that respondents preferred to schedule an interview for a future time. Interviewers also explained that the interview should be set up for a time when the woman had some privacy and would not have to respond to interruptions. Respondents were offered a variety of interview locations: their own home, a private office at OISE, or the use of another office on Bloor St. in the west annex area of the city.[16]

Interviewers were instructed to schedule the interview at the convenience of the respondent, but were to suggest a variety of times that they would personally be available to interview the respondent. If the interviewer who set up the appointment was not able to meet the respondent at the time she chose,

[16]This office is the therapy office of one of the project's directors.

another team member was always available to do so, and this was conveyed to the respondent in the process of setting up the interview.

An interview appointment form was left with the respondent, which confirmed, in writing, the date, time and day of the appointment, gave the project telephone number, and thanked the respondent in advance for her interest and participation in the study.

8.6 Ensuring Privacy

It was imperative that interviews be conducted in private. Having another household member or any other person around during the interview could only serve to inhibit respondents during the process and may preclude the possibility of disclosure. This would be even more problematic in the case of a respondent wanting to talk about any abuse experiences she may have had with a current partner. For these reasons, interviewers were instructed to carry out interviews only when the respondent and she were alone. Interviewers were also trained on how to handle any unexpected interruptions, like a woman's partner returning home while an interview was in progress. In these situations the interviewer was to turn to a neutral part of the questionnaire (for example, the demographics) and go through the questions in that section until privacy was restored. If it proved impossible to re-establish privacy, the interviewer was to arrange another appointment time to complete the interview.

Many times respondents would claim that it was fine for the interview to be conducted in the presence of another household member (e.g. a partner or

roommate watching t.v. in the background, etc.) but interviewers were trained to indicate that it was part of their job to make sure the interviews were standardized and carried out in privacy and without interruption. This shifted the onus away from the respondent and onto the interviewer to insist that she was not permitted to carry out the interview in the presence of others. In several cases during the pilot, respondents thanked interviewers at the completion of the interview, for insisting on conditions of privacy during the interview, saying that had not fully realized the ways in which the presence of another person would have inhibited them in their discussion and responses.

9. Fieldwork and Interviewing Materials

A number of materials utilized in contacting households and for conducting the fieldwork and data collection phase of the pilot and study are described below.

9.1 The Introductory Letter

The study is introduced to prospective respondents through an introductory letter printed on York University letterhead, which is addressed to "Female Resident" and mailed to randomly selected addresses. The purpose of the letter is to provide advance notification to respondents about the general nature of the study, to provide legitimation for the study and to encourage potential respondents to participate. Information about the project is provided and phone numbers are indicated should prospective respondents wish to make any

inquiries. The letter was also sent out in three translations: Portuguese, Italian and Chinese.

It has been demonstrated that an introductory letter is worth the extra cost and time. It is a methodologically sound procedure because it can often assure respondents about the legitimacy of of the study and can generate interest in it.

9.2 Fieldwork Letters to Leave With Households / Respondents

Not At Home Letter

It is often the case that, despite all efforts to approach households at times when occupants are most likely to be home, interviewers may repeatedly approach an address where no one is at home. In this case, to cut down on repeated visits to the household and to utilize project funds and staff resources most efficiently, a letter was left at the address informing the occupants that an interviewer from the project has visited and requesting that a member of the household, preferably an eligible respondent, contact the project office. This letter also shows our commitment and effort. Many respondents were motivated to respond (for example, by telephoning into the project office) to these letters which were personalized by the interviewers.

Missed Appointment Letter

In the event that a respondent was unable to make a scheduled interview appointment, but has not notified the project office or interviewer, the interviewer

left a "Missed Appointment" form at the address, asking the respondent to contact the office to make another more convenient appointment time.

9.3 Interview Materials For Respondents

Appointment Form

When a respondent agreed to an interview at the door but needed to schedule another time, she is left with an appointment reminder form, with information about the date and time of the interview and with the project's telephone line, should she require any further information. This form was intended as a courtesy to the respondent, and to help minimize the number of forgotten or missed interview appointments.

Consent Form

The consent form was reviewed along with other project procedures in the ethical review undertaken through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. It meets all standards for securing informed consent from respondents, explaining: the nature of the study, the voluntary nature of participation as a respondent, the randomness of respondent selection, funding sources, and the confidentiality of the interview. The consent form is signed only after the respondent has had time to read it, and only following the verbal introduction to and explanation of the study made by the interviewer in face-to-face contact.

The Thank You Letter & Resource Kit

At the conclusion of the interview, all respondents were given a personally signed thank-you letter in which we express appreciation for the time they took

to participate in the study and to share their ideas and experiences. They are also invited to phone the project office should they wish to add anything to what they've said, or require any more information and follow-up.

The resource kit is also left with all respondents, regardless of whether or not any abuse experiences were disclosed. Interviewers were trained to be familiar with referral resources, and provide any information the respondent may need. Information on services for assaulted women, support groups, and self-defense classes is included. It is important to leave respondents with some information for any follow-up they may wish, or for any friends, family members or other women they may know who need help.

Form for Respondents Wanting Project Results

Because our preliminary and exploratory pre-test interviews yielded so many respondents asking for results of the study, and because we wanted to give something back to respondents, we implemented a system during the pilot to allow respondents to request a copy of the study's preliminary results. We will require funding to implement this commitment.

Should a respondent choose to fill in the form she is reminded that her interview is kept entirely confidential and is identified only by a computer code number. Her address is removed from the file, and the form requesting the study results is filed in a locked cabinet, separately from the completed interviews.

10. Conclusion

Overall, the pilot phase of the Women's Safety Project was highly successful. It enabled us to test an already developed methodology and make final adjustments to facilitate the interviewing for the main study with a larger sample. Some significant changes were made to the research instrument based on a review of the data collected during the pilot. A highly successful training and supervision program was planned and undertaken with a team of skilled interviewers, and many small but significant adjustments to the fieldwork processes were implemented to facilitate the work of contacting households and prospective respondents.

Since the completion of the pilot we have been fortunate enough to have completed an additional set of 270 interviews with support from other funding agencies. Funds are still being sought for the data entry and analysis phase. We look forward to the rapid dissemination of the findings from this unique and comprehensive data base for discussion amongst all those concerned to understand and end violence in women's lives.

Below, we append some preliminary feedback from respondents at the completion of the pilot interviews. Before leaving, the interviewer asked each respondent if there was anything else she wanted to add to what she had said,

and if she had any comments she would like to make about the actual interview.[17]

In response to the question: "Is there anything you want to add to what you've already said," the following comments were elicited:

"Violence in Toronto is getting worse. 10 years ago I was never afraid, but now I restrict my movements all the time. . . pornography makes violence normalized"

"I dyed my hair brown from blond because I was getting so much harassment. I'm changing myself because I feel intimidated and vulnerable on the street. Since I've moved to Toronto, I've had the most degrading things happen -- men whipping down their pants, sexually explicit things shouted at me, people reading and showing me porn and jacking off on the TTC. . . . it's difficult to survive as a female in this city."

Referring to an experience of unwanted sex with a husband, one respondent minimized her experience at the conclusion of the interview, by saying that, *"I don't want them [the people running the project] to think it was something so terrible. . . don't take it so seriously."*

"Listening to the questions I realize I have been extremely fortunate in my life, my family life, my choice of partner, my friends. . . I have the feeling over the last five years in the city that women have to be a lot more vigilant . . ."

"You asked me if any one else in my family abused me, I don't remember but there's a possibility that my father did. It's not a clear memory yet. The interview is very thorough. It tends to stir up a lot."

"I know that I have been one of the lucky ones. It's about time the politicians did something about it."

In response to the question: "Do you have any comments or suggestions about this interview?", the following comments were elicited:

"It's very interesting"

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[17]More detailed information, will, of course, be forthcoming at the completion of the data analysis phase of the project, for which funds are still being sought.

"The interview is good. It's very personal and in-depth. More personal that I would have liked at times!"

"The interview is very thorough. I'm glad I did it. I'd like to see the results at some point. It's important research."

"I was expecting it to be more open-ended."

" I think it's a very thorough and needed study."

"You're very good at pumping out information. . . Where can I get the results?"

"Shorten it."

"I'm glad somebody's finally doing something. It's been for too long and there's far too much work to be done. Our society seems to treat women and children as belongings."

"I thought it was done very well. I felt very comfortable through the whole thing. It's long but not boring -- it's very thorough."

"Just put it to good use!"

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